

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:  
controlling feedback by customizing feedback rules for an online auction substantially no earlier than entry of auction rules into an auction program by an end-user;  
storing the customized feedback rules for future use by the auction program; and  
conducting the online auction by the auction program using the feedback rules.
2. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein controlling feedback by customizing feedback rules for the online auction substantially no earlier than entry of auction rules into the auction program by the end-user further comprises customizing feedback rules by the end-user contemporaneously with entering auction rules.
3. The method as defined in claim 2 wherein controlling feedback by customizing feedback rules by the end-user contemporaneously with entering auction rules further comprises customizing at least one feedback rule by the end-user from the group: feedback type rules; feedback timing rules; and feedback content rules.
4. The method as defined in claim 2 wherein controlling feedback by customizing feedback rules by the end-user contemporaneously with entering auction rules further comprises selecting feedback rules by the end-user from a pre-determined set of feedback rules.
5. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein controlling feedback by customizing feedback rules for an online auction substantially no earlier than entry of auction rules into an auction program by an end-user further comprises customizing feedback rules by the end-user after the online auction has begun.

6. The method as defined in claim 5 wherein customizing feedback rules after the online auction has begun further comprises changing previously customized feedback rules by the end-user after the auction has begun.

7. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein controlling feedback by customizing feedback rules for the online auction substantially no earlier than entry of auction rules into the auction program by the end-user further comprises customizing feedback rules by the auction program based on the auction rules entered by the end-user.

8. The method as defined in claim 7 wherein customizing feedback rules by the auction program based on the auction rules entered by the end-user further comprises:

comparing the auction rules entered by the end-user to previously stored auction rules to ascertain similarities; and  
selecting feedback rules by the auction program for the online auction based on similarities of the auction rules for the online auction with the previously stored auction rules.

9. The method as defined in claim 8 wherein comparing the auction rules entered by the end-user to previously stored auction rules to ascertain similarities further comprises comparing an auction type entered by the end-user to previously stored auction types.

10. The method as defined in claim 9 wherein selecting feedback rules by the auction program for the online auction based on similarities of the auction rules for the online auction with previously stored auction rules further comprises selecting feedback rules by the auction program based on the feedback rules used for previously stored auction types.

11. A computer readable medium containing instructions that are executable by a computer system, and when executed the instructions implement a method

comprising allowing selection of a feedback rule for an online auction contemporaneously with an end-user initiating an online auction, wherein the feedback rules is one of the group consisting of personalized feedback, conditional feedback, timing of feedback, a combination of leading K bids and rank among leading X bids, and a combination of leading K bids and whether among leading X bids.

12. The computer readable medium as defined in claim 11 wherein allowing selection of the feedback rule for an online auction contemporaneously with an end-user initiating the online auction further comprises allowing the end-user to select at least one feedback rule from the group:

- no feedback;
- full disclosure;
- leading K bids, where K is a number equal to or less than a number of bidders in the auction;
- rank among leading X bids, where X is a number equal to or less than a number of bidders in the auction;
- whether among leading X bids;
- a combination of leading K bids and rank among leading X bids; and
- a combination of leading K bids and whether among leading X bids.

13. The computer readable medium as defined in claim 11 further comprising allowing the end user to change selection of feedback rules for the online auction during the online auction.

14. The computer readable medium as defined in claim 11 wherein allowing selection of the feedback rule for the online auction contemporaneously with the end-user initiating the online auction further comprises allowing selection of at least one the group:

- feedback type rules;
- feedback timing rules; and
- feedback content rules.

15. The computer readable medium as defined in claim 11 wherein allowing selection of the feedback rule for an online auction contemporaneously with an end-user initiating an online auction further comprises selecting the feedback rule by the instructions based on auction details provided by the end-user initiating the online auction.

16. The computer readable medium as defined in claim 11 wherein allowing selection of the feedback rule for an online auction contemporaneously with an end-user initiating an online auction further comprises selecting an event tracked by the online auction, wherein occurrence of the event triggers a change of feedback rules during the online auction.

17. A computer system, comprising:  
a processor operable to execute instructions of an auction program;  
a network interface coupled to said processor;  
wherein the auction program is operable to provide data to client computers over the network interface for generation of an auction interface, wherein the auction interface permits an end-user of an online auction to customize feedback of the online auction by selecting a feedback rule, and wherein the feedback rule implemented is from the group consisting of feedback timing, personalized feedback, a combination of leading K bids and rank among leading X bids, and a combination of leading K bids and whether among leading X bids.

18. The computer system as defined in claim 17 wherein the auction program is further adapted to allow the end-user to select a feedback from a pre-defined list of feedback rules to use for the online auction.

19. The computer system as defined in claim 18 wherein the feedback rules comprise at least one selected from the group:

feedback type rules;  
feedback timing rules; and  
feedback content rules.

20. The computer system of claim 19 wherein the feedback type rules comprise at least one selected from the group:

anonymous feedback; and  
personalized feedback.

21. The computer system of claim 19 wherein the feedback timing rules comprise at least one selected from the group:

periodic feedback;  
continuous feedback; and  
conditional feedback.

22. The computer system of claim 19 wherein the feedback content rules comprise at least one selected from the group:

no feedback;  
full disclosure;  
leading K bids, where K is a number equal to or less than a number of bidders in the auction;  
rank among leading X bids, where X is a number equal to or less than a number of bidders in the auction;  
whether among leading X bids;  
a combination of leading K bids and rank among leading X bids; and  
a combination of leading K bids and whether among leading X bids.

23. A computer system, comprising:  
a means for executing programs and instructions operable to execute instructions of an auction program;

a means for communicating data to network-attached client computer systems, the means for communicating coupled to the means for executing; and

wherein the auction program is operable to provide data to the client computer systems over the means for communicating operable to generate an auction interface, and wherein the auction interface permits an end-user of an online auction to select a feedback from a pre-defined list of feedback rules to use for the online auction.

24. The computer system as defined in claim 23 wherein the auction program is further adapted to select a feedback from a pre-defined list of feedback rules based on auction details provided by the end-user.